
RESEARCH ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERN BUILDINGS
TO URBAN AESTHETICS.

This Dissertation is sent to The Architecture and Planning
School, I.T.M. Shah Alam, to fulfill the subject
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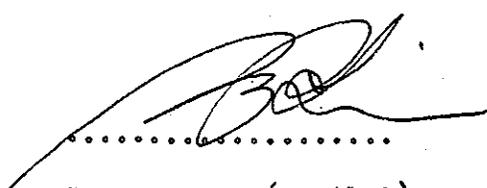
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1.01 PREFACE

In the name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to Him for which without Him, all this would not be possible.

The intention of doing the dissertation research is to allow us students, to broaden and sharpen our mentality and to be able to commit ourselves with responsibility. The research is also done to achieve written evidence on the hypothesis made. Throughout the process, problems, suggestions and ideas will be brought forward.

This titled dissertation comprise of the effect of modern architecture in Kuala Lumpur city, which includes modern city planning, modern buildings designs and the current problems that K.L. is facing.

As a conclusion, suggestions and ideas done in sketches, will be included.

- Writer-

1.02 INTRODUCTION

Generally, we take for granted that the progress and increase of human's intelligence, ability and goals are for the good of all mankind, nature and the universe, to achieve a better living environment. Is this so? Just look around you, at the world and we will find the answer. For if we observe, as time passes, many events and changes have taken place. Some of these events, left a 'beautiful memory to ponder and take note of' and yet some of it are like 'criminals, robbing us of the natural gifts presented by God in each of us, man and nature'.

With each era of growth, not only does the living habits, culture and society too are affected to certain changes. Even politics, economics, religion, social, philosophy and architecture are not spared from changes. The growth and change of architecture in the urban development are closely related to the human's thinking and progress. For example, before Independence, Malaysia or Malaya then, had a very different social and culture which was very much 'in depth', rich of their own identity. Architecture then was very vernacular and traditional, in tune with the lifestyle of the people then.

After Independence, buildings were multiplying and still is, except for the recent economic slowdown. Buildings of all types, shapes and sizes are being built without sensitivity to the overall environmental development. Thus buildings are being built as an individual, without considering the whole aesthetic environment. This is especially seen in the cities and in Malaysia, it is prominent in Kuala Lumpur city or as most of us would call it, 'The collage city'.

In Kuala Lumpur, buildings are being designed and built as if its for a competition, in which each designer would mostly put aside the surrounding environment for consideration and concentrated on showing off their designs. This leads to buildings being 'alien' to the environment and thus giving uneasy signals to humans about their surrounding living environment. And now, mankind are forced to live in these pitiful environmental situation and have remained untouch with nature (feelings and spirit). Society no longer can judge what is right and wrong for them, they no longer can tell the difference between a chaotic environment and a serene environment, due to their senses being numb. In short, society has lost its sense of intuition, in touch with their inner feelings and sensories, to become machines, mechanized and computerized. Nowadays, everything have to be rationalized.

Gone are the days of poetic words, romanticisms, the lovely sensitive, intuitive feelings in us all. As Mike Samuels M.D. and Nancy Samuels stated in their book entitled 'Seeing with the Mind's Eye':-

"The birth of civilisation, development,.....rationality took over from consciousness (inner visions) and dominated it. Thus man becomes detached from his experience and nature".

Therefore architecture can serve as a purpose to bring man back to his relationship with 'nature'.

1.03 LITERATURE REVIEW ON MODERN ARCHITECTURE

The style of modern architecture did not spring into being all at once. It evolved slowly to become a new architecture which is based on scientific progress, to satisfy both practical and spiritual modern needs. During this movement, buildings are to be pure in structure and materials, stripped of any applied ornamental art. This have been stated by Tony Garnier in his statement which rejects ancient architecture of ornamenting buildings with unnecessary art.

"Like all architect based on false principles, ancient architecture is an error. Truth alone is beautiful. In architecture, truth is the result of calculations made to satisfy known necessities with known materials".¹

Tony Garniers' statement implied that buildings of the ancient, project a false impression of its true identity. "Only the truth is beautiful", said he and now we are faced with the truth! Is it beautiful? The answer to this question will remain subjective as long as the roots of our minds are diverse.

¹Pevsner, Nikolaus, "Pioneers of Modern Design", Penguin Books, 1975.

However, with the increasing disaffection of the public to modern architecture today this particular style has become the target of attack by architectural critics and the practising profession. Most literatures written on modern architecture depicts the negative effects it contributes to architecture and the environment to mankind. One most often cited example is Pruitt Igoe, the 2,700 unit public housing project in St. Louis that was demolished a few years ago. One such literature is a book written by Brent C. Brolin:-

"For over half a century, modern architecture has been guided by 19th century principles. It is difficult to look beyond the modern ideology because we have been educated to consider it as the only acceptable set to architectural rules. It has become a sanctified body of knowledge, assumed to operate always, and seldom, if ever questioned. So ingrained have its tenets become that we resort to them as reflex action. And yet these principles no longer apply to the world in which the architect now works".²

Theories and principles that have been accepted as a guideline for architectural developments are no longer accepted and successful when put into practice. Why has

²Brolin, C. Brent, "The Failure of Modern Architecture", Studio Vista, New York, 1978, P.7.

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aesthetic of Kuala Lumpur will be researched. The question whether or not this particular style can be adapted to traditional features for better aesthetic qualities in Kuala Lumpur have been lingering in the minds of the professionals.

But the subject of aesthetic beauty goes far beyond the physical aspect but reaches deeper into the spiritual meaning. Thus a girl with a pretty face does not necessary mean that she is beautiful, 'spiritually' if her soul is full of envy, jealousy, hatred or insincerity. Yet a girl of ordinary 'plain Jane' looks may be considered very beautiful if her inner beauty shines through. For 'Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder'.

Therefore in returning to the subject concerned, the aesthetic meaning that will be discussed will be both of physical and spiritual aspect. Alison and Peter Smithson have chosen to throw light on the theories behind the architecture of the modern movement.

"We write to make ourselves see what we have got in the inescapable present...to give another interpretation of the same ruins...to show a glimpse of another aesthetic".⁴

⁴Smithson, Peter and Alison, "Without Rhetoric-An Architectural Aesthetic, Latimer New Dimensions, London, 1973.

In the tradition of Violet le Duc and Le Corbusier, Alison and Peter Smithson throughout their architectural career tried to elucidate the theories behind their own work, and to think about certain buildings of their mentors.

"Architecture tends to be long-lasting, which makes architects cautious, to try to understand, to respond intelligently. They tend to dig into things, so that their intuition has as sound a base as possible to work on."⁵

Therefore the public and critics must not judge the works of the modernist architects without understanding the meaning behind their designs. For the works of the earlier modern architects have brought great changes to the architectural world and has attracted a lot of attention, such as the works of the late Le Corbusier in La Tourette or Ronchamp. But has the followers of the modern architectural style follow through with their forefather's principals? Does modern buildings in Kuala Lumpur satisfy the meaning behind the architecture of the modern movement? How does it contribute to the aesthetic quality of urban aesthetic in Kuala Lumpur? As far as my knowledge permits me, there has not been any literature in Malaysia, written on the subject concerned. Therefore it is of high expectation that this research will be the start of many more research to come.

Let me end the review with a phrase I find very interesting and useful to fellow architects and students.

"Go out to nature and learn from experience what natural structures men find beautiful, because it is among such structures that men's aesthetic sensitivity evolved".⁶

⁶Humprey, Nicholas K., "Natural Aesthetics" an article depicted from the book entitled "Architecture for People".

⁵Ibid 4

1.04 REASONS FOR CHOOSING TOPIC

Kuala Lumpur city is fast developing into a metropolitan city. With its given priority to progress of economics and politics and advancement in technology, the democratic government policy of serving the public is questioned. Majority of the land in Kuala Lumpur have been developed into corporate firms, hotels, public and government buildings with residential buildings coming close to last. These developments follow closely the modern International style principles; Thus the effect of borrowing western architectural style, influencing the architecture, social and environment of Malaysians are great. Its influence have changed the social activities of the Malaysians into a fast paced, rat-race community, devoid of cultural heritage.

The traditional, humane aestheticness of the old cities have been replaced by inhumane, 'alien' developments. Modern buildings have been much publicised and talked of by the practising profession. Some wrote of its negative effects to urban fabric while others hail of its positive contributions. This research however, offers the public to make its own value of judgement on the matter concerned. No doubt, that we cannot turn back the time or redevelop

Kuala Lumpur into our 'dream city' but we can however, control and be more cautious of future developments in Kuala Lumpur and other cities in Malaysia. Then maybe the problem of high density population, traffic congestion and unemployment in the city can be avoided.

1.05 OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to analyse in what ways has Modern buildings contributed and affected the aesthetic quality of urban forms in Kuala Lumpur. The writer will collect, analyse and give information, facts, comments and critics on their contribution towards the existing urban environment.

It is hoped that this research will be able to give realisation to the public on the importance of aesthetic to urban forms. For if the public are not made aware of this, they will never come to realise on how the growth of an unsystematic development, due to pure ignorance or unrealisation of some other people, will destroy the natural aesthetic environment, that we (whether we realise it or not) are all craving for.

1.07 METHODS OF RESEARCH

The research will be done in accordance to the method stated below. It will be done in a few stages:-

First stage

To investigate the development of Kuala Lumpur and to identify what particular style of architectural expression influenced the aesthetic quality of urban forms in Kuala Lumpur. This includes,

- A random typological survey of modern buildings in Kuala Lumpur.
- The evolution of modern buildings in Kuala Lumpur.

Second stage

To conduct random analysis of modern architectural influence in Kuala Lumpur, its problems and contributions. To analyse the factors relating to the problems concerned to further understand the situation.

Third stage

To research and analyse selected modern buildings under its category - residential, commercial, hotels, offices, - stating its contributions, giving comments, opinion and critics.

Fourth stage

To analyse the above variables, form conclusions and offer suggestions. Suggestions will be in the form of theories and sketches of proposals. All this will be based on the facts mentioned, through all the stages above. It is hoped that in the future, the aesthetic quality of Kuala Lumpur or other Malaysian cities, will have its own identity, in tune with the Malaysian social and culture.

1.08 FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

- 1) Introduction
 - On the chosen subject.
 - Objective of research.
 - Method of research, formula of research, framework of research and arrangement of research.

- 2) Random Analysis
 - Evolution of Modern buildings in K.L.
 - Contributions of Modern architectural influence in Kuala Lumpur.
 - The problems and effects of this influence.

- 3) Study Analysis
 - The problems and contributions of selected modern buildings in K.L. under category of:
 - Modern residential housings
 - Modern commercial complex
 - Hotels
 - Modern corporate firms (offices)

- 4) Problem solving
 - Offering alternatives, theories, ideas and brief suggestions.
 - Sketches of ideas and suggestions.

5) Conclusion

- To form conclusion based on the facts given.